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EDITORIAL NOTES

One of the educational problems which a summer vacation brings vividly to the consciousness of the community is the problem of determining how much schooling should be provided in a year. Many a parent is fully persuaded on the first of September that school ought to be kept open eleven or twelve months. After a struggle to keep a restless boy properly occupied, after a contest with cheap and unprofitable forms of amusement, many a mother looks forward to the opening of school with relief. The teacher, on the other hand, dreads the task of undoing the ill effects of two or three months of idleness or worse. The slow process of getting a grade under way is a familiar discouragement to all who teach.

Many who note these facts on the first of September will forget them by the first of November and will accept as before the familiar dogma that vacation is necessary because everyone is worn out at the end of the school year. The summer months, furthermore, are impossible months for intellectual work. One should be idle; one has no energy; one may do himself permanent injury by not relaxing during these months!

To be sure, there is abundant evidence that many children suffer more from climatic conditions during the rigorous months of the winter and early spring than during the warm months. Furthermore, if we were put to the definite test we should all assert that the ideal educational system is one which so mixes effort and relaxation that exhaustion never appears. We should therefore find it difficult to defend certain of the common statements about the necessity of a long summer vacation. Yet so fixed has the custom of such vacations become that—except on the

first of September—we are likely to ask no questions that shall disturb our practices and beliefs about these vacations. The problem will not down, however. We must deal with it, fully recognizing the facts which at this time in the year are before us. Indeed, there are practical activities now well under way which indicate the direction which our thinking must follow.

First, all school activity must be so organized as to furnish its own safeguard against exhaustion. If the older school left the pupil worn out at the end of the day or the year, the new school has prevented this by introducing activity and relaxation and variety.

**Safeguard
Against
Exhaustion**

Second, amusement should be mixed with serious work and both should be intelligently guided. The public must learn to play as well as to read serious books and do sums in addition. One of the great discoveries of our social workers is that modern men and women are as clumsy about recreation as they are in other forms of organized activity. We must teach men and women to enjoy themselves and we can best do this by teaching the children in the schools.

**Training
in
Recreation**

Third, we should recognize that periods of delay in individual development do not obey any law of the calendar. One child is interrupted in his development at one date, another child at another. If in addition to these individual interruptions we impose a general interruption, the sum for a given child may be very great in a single twelvemonth. Why not provide for continuity in the institution and allow individual needs to dictate the interruptions? This is not so difficult as it seems when stated in this form. The fact is that we are providing now for all kinds of individual interruptions. Children are sick, or families move from one place to another, or parents are negligent until the active truant officer terminates a vacation which does not limit itself to the conventional dates. Whenever a child suffers from one or the other of these irregularities we feel the urgent demand that our school system become more flexible and more complete in its provision of opportunity.

**Individual
Vacations**

Fourth, economic and social necessity will force us to make a radical change in our present practice. The community has invested in the schoolhouse and ground a sum of money which it will not permit to lie idle during a sixth or a quarter of the year. The plant must be kept open if it can be profitably used. That it can be profitably used is being demonstrated in all of our great cities today. Our vacation school has not only come to stay, it has come to modify the whole conception of public right to use the school. Those who can afford to go away to the country or seashore are in no wise hindered from doing so by the program here outlined. Many of these seek even now the advantages of training camps or schools in the woods. Let those who can afford them out of private means have these advantages of variety in surroundings and instruction. The parallel demand is that those who cannot go to mountain or shore should have for their development the same opportunity that we have always recognized as necessary during the fall, winter, and spring.

Finally, what will come to the teacher through the adoption of this program? Nothing but advantage. Many a young woman goes into a store or office now because she can there earn wages twelve months in the year. She simply cannot afford the present school vacation. Furthermore, in a well-organized system the teacher, like the pupil, could have some option as to absence from the school. The better school systems are even now providing leaves of absences for teachers and officers. This system of vacation for a reason will doubtless develop. When it becomes an established practice we shall have a more efficient school and a better adjusted staff of instructors.